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In the American Southwest four million Spanish-Americans are concentrated in five states. Their cultural tenacity is a peculiarity not displayed by other immigrant groups. Even after 125 years they speak and live in a Spanish-American society. The reason for this is difficult to discern, but it is felt by some that this tenacity is very noble and laudable.

In attempting to explain the Spanish-American society, the author gives a history of the Spanish language from the time of the Moor influence in Spain to the influx of Spanish-speaking peoples into the Southwest. The problem of acculturation is discussed.

The second part of the report is concerned with bi-lingualism in education. It is pointed out that a rich culture lies unharvested by the present educational system. The true problem in the school is not linguistic but is one of social policy in school organization which results in teaching handicaps. Although the educational level of the Mexican-American is statistically quite low, it contrasts sharply with his lingual proficiency in his native vernacular. The reason for this lies with his isolated position in American society.

It should be realized that bilingualism and multilingualism are of great value in our relations with the rest of the world.

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SPANISH IN THE SOUTHWEST

by

George I. Sánchez

There are close to four million persons with Spanish-Mexican antecedents in five southwestern states: Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Most of them still speak Spanish; and, considering the circumstances, remarkably good Spanish in the main. This is a matter of considerable surprise to some observers because, among these Mexican-Americans, there are many who have been exposed to the English language since the American Occupation that took place some 125 years ago--and, among those, there are many who speak only Spanish. When one compares this situation with that of European immigrants who came to this country much later--Italians, Poles, and others--most of whom have lost their original vernaculars, this would seem to be an exhibition of unprecedented cultural tenacity. Why have these Americans of Spanish-Mexican backgrounds been so stubborn in relinquishing their vernacular? What are the institutions and the forces that made this possible?

In the answer to these questions one would expect to find some sort of concerted effort on the part of these people to retain their language, some sort of resistance to adopting English, some sort of cultural pride. Or, one would expect to find that the English-speaking dominant group, in its wisdom, had recognized the values inherent in the preservation of the Spanish language and had instituted programs to that end. That is, one would expect to find some laudable and positive cause for the persistence of this beautiful and important language, some wise head, institution, or policy that has conserved this natural cultural resource. Sad to say, the major causal factor is none of these but one which involves factors that are far less noble, far less intelligent, and much more negative than positive. The conservation of our heritage of the Spanish language is an eloquent illustration that it is, indeed, an ill wind that does not blow somebody some good! But let us approach the matter cautiously, with circumspection.

In dealing with the conservation of Spanish in the Southwest we must understand both the positive factors that have operated in the development of the Spanish lanugage, and its introduction and perpetuation in the area, and the negative forces that have resulted in the failure to make the Mexican-American a monolinqual, English-speaking person. The former phase is, essentially, a matter of understanding historical antecedents; the latter is one of evaluating the factors that have resulted in the failure of the schools in their obstinate persistence to make English the only language of these Mexican-Americans. This failure, more than anything else, has brought about the conservation of Spanish, had produced a bilingualism of a wide qualitative range -- though, for the disadvantaged classes, the Spanish in this bilinqualism is of superior quality than is the English. On the other hand, one must concede that there is a minority of persons of Spanish-Mexican descent whose English is excellent and whose Spanish is very limited or non-existent.

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Spain and Spanish

We usually think of Spanish as a Latin language, romance. It is that, of course; but what is often overlooked is that, in important ways, it is not Latin and, in some very important ways, it is not even European. Spain has been a cultural crossroad from the earliest days of recorded history. Pre-historic man, Phoenician, early Greek, Carthaginians, and other early peoples blended their genes and cultures to form the Spaniard that, later, the Romans and then their conquerors, especially the Visigoths, ruled. During the various stages of this process, the languages of the people of Spain received infusions from all of the cultural contacts involved, especially from the Latin of the Romans. Then came the greatest invastion of all, that of the Arabic-speaking Mohammedans in 711 A.D.

For almost 800 years the "Moors" were in Spain; ruling virtually all of the Iberian Peninsula for a time, then slowly they were pushed southward by the Christian armies. During this long period of conflict a remarkable process of acculturation took place. Though at times the conflict was bitter and bloody, there were long periods of stalemate when Christians, Sephardic Jews, and Moslems lived in comparative peace and tolerance. Cities controlled by the Mohammedans tolerated the subordinate Christian people; those controlled by the Christians, in turn, tolerated the subordinate Arabic-speaking minority. In both, the Jew played a leading role as the businessman, the broker, the financial counselor. The effect upon the Spaniard, and upon the Spanish language, by this strange co-existence is incalculable. The Sephardic Jews and the Mohammedans brought to Europe the wisdom of the Middle East, of Egypt, of North Africa. They brought institutions, technologies, value systems, instruments, and formal learning that, blending with what they found on the peninsula, produced the Golden Age of Spain in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries.

While the effects of this process of acculturation are evident in many fields-- architecture, religion, agriculture, educational institutions, political science, folklore, value systems, et cetera - nowhere is all of this so clearly symbolized as in the Spanish language. Today, we have at least 4,000 words in Spanish that are not Latin but Arabic. Many of the words for luxuries -- luxuries little known or completely unknown to the Iberian Christians before the coming of the Moslems -- are Arabic. The finest of jewels are alajas, pillows are almohadas, fine carpets are alfombras, and so on for a very large percentage of the Spanish words that have the initial al, such as alguacil (a police magistrate). While the Christian could say, "Que Dios nos..." when he expressed a devout hope, he quickly adopted the Moslem prayer to Allah that is to the same effect and that has become the Spanish word ojala -- "would that..." -- which, expressing unreality, necessarily requires the subjunctive mode. For example, "Ojala´ que estuviera," "Ojala´ que venga," "Ojala´ que tuviese," Then there are those words which refer to a process, like adobar ("to conserve"). The word adobe, now a good English word, comes from this verb; and one may have, in Spanish,

an adobe of meat or vegetables just as one may have an adobe of clay and straw! Carne adobada (usually pork that has been steeped in hot peppers and other spices, and thus preserved) has long been a favorite food in New Mexico and, I suppose, in other Spanish-speaking areas which had no other means of preserving pork. I see the hand of the Jew in this process; for, while beef and mutton may be preserved by drying (in dry climates), pork was a risky food, fresh or dried, before the days of modern technical inspection. But it would be a hardy bug, indeed, that could survive the long hours of immersion in the hot peppers and the spices (and the subsequent drying) that my people devote to the preparation of carne adobada! I venture to guess that even the most orthodox of Jews would concede that such meat is kosher!

There are many other Spanish words that are written and pronounced in virtually the same way in Arabic and in Spanish. The words for shoes, for trousers, for neckties, for socks, for shirts and for many other articles are essentially the same in Arabic as in Spanish. It is not within the scope of this paper to delve into the development of the Spanish language in Spain in any detail, to point out the contributions of Visigoths and Greeks, and others, in the formulation of Spanish. Suffice it to note that while the foundations of Spanish are Latin, romance, the structure is a variegated one to which many tongues contributed.

Spanish and New Spain

When Spain, in the phenomenally expansive mood of its Golden Age, came to what today is Mexico, it did not come to a wilderness nor to a cultural vacuum. There were millions of people in the area that came to be known as New Spain, people who presented a kaleidoscope of cultures, of languages, and of degrees of civilization. Conservative estimates place their number at 10 million, though there are authoritative sources that go far beyond this estimate. In the bibliography to this paper will be found sources that elaborate upon the facts of the indigenous peoples of New Spain at the time of the Conquest. Those sources will reveal the magnitude, the wide scope of the cultural attributes of these peoples. More particularly, they will reveal the great linquistic variety that was represented. The Maya language, the language of the Aztecs, the languages of the Pueblos, the language of the Otomies -- these and many others differed from each other as much as Chinese differs from English! Peoples living in close proximity to each other spoke vastly different languages. Some, like the Navajos, had linquistic relatives only far, far away -- in the case of the Navajos (and their cousins, the Apaches) their closest relatives were in the interior of Alaska! These variegated tongues have had a tremendous influence in the development of Spanish in this part of the New World. It must be kept in mind that, in the three colonial centuries, less than one million Spaniards came to New Spain -- one million Spanish-speaking people among ten or more million native peoples who spoke diverse languages.

It must be remembered, also, that, in New Spain, the Spaniard came upon flora and fauna, upon processes, upon customs, and so on for which he had no terminology, for which he had to accept native designations. While that strange, wonderful new bird, the turkey, could be described as gallina de la tierra (as my people in New Mexico still call it); or while the Spanish word pavo could be used (as it is in some places), it was very easy to fall into calling it a guajolote, or a cocono, or some other Indian name. In may instances there were alternatives, as noted above. But what to call a "ring-tail cat"? It had to be cacomistle (which is a proper English word for that beautiful creature now). What to call a raccoon but a mapache? Try calling an opossum a zariqueya, the corrent Spanish word, in Mexico or in Texas! No one will understand you? The name is tlacuache.

In the nomenclature of birds, and animals, regionalism and a great deal of confusion prevails becuase of the native linquistic variety and becuase of the application of Spanish names to creatures that were unknown in Spain. So, we find that the raccoon is a tejon (Spanish for badger) to some, mapache to many others -- while tejon is still a badger in places like New Mexico! In many instances, however, alternatives were virtually impossible. A quetzal could hardly be called by any other name; nor could a mocking bird (sinsontle), though one can stretch things a little and call him a burlon (which really means "mocker" and has an unkindly connotation). While a coyote could be called a lobo ("wolf," as he is often called in English), he is hardly the wolf of the eastern hemisphere, so he is never called a lobo -- and the double meanings of these two terms are highly significant. A secondary meaning of coyote refers to a man who is "sly" or "deceitful"; while a lobo refers to one who is not only that but thoroughly rapacious! And so it goes, the marriage of Spanish and the native languages of New Spain producing a most interesting and challenging variation in the already highly varied Spanish of Spain.

I would be laboring the point to dwell at any length on the many other contributions to Spanish by the Indian languages of New Spain. The names of plants (mesquite, for a simple illustration), the names of foods (nixtamal, tamales, chile) and the names of many objects in Mexican Spanish are Indian. The centuries of contact between the invaders from the Iberian peninsula and that of the peoples they conquered gave a wondrous flavor to the language of New Spain. It is this well-seasoned and flavorful Spanish that is the heritage of the Americans of Mexican descent in the Southwest.

The Spanish-Speaking in the Southwest

Spanish-speaking people have been in the Southwest for three hundred and sixty-five years. The villages north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, founded in 1598, take second place only to St. Augustine, Florida, settled in 1565, as the oldest settlements of Europeans on the mainland of what is now the United States. The New Mexico

settlements, followed a little more than a century later by those in Texas and almost two centuries later by those in California, represent a colonial effort by Spain which left an indelible imprint upon the history and culture of the Southwest, and of the United States as a whole. More important still, that colonial endeavor left people here, from California to Texas, whose descendants constitute a part of the group that we now refer to, very loosely, as Spanish-speaking.

Note should be made of the fact that the colonial hispanos were not culturally homogeneous. The nuevo mexicanos, having arrived in the region as early as 1598, were different from their cousins, the californios and the texanos, who arrived much later. The date of migration and settlement, with all its attendant cultural concomitants, and geographic isolation, natural resources, the number and kind of Indians among whom they settled and mixed, and many such factors resulted in not one Spanish-speaking people but several, each with distinctive cultural personalities. The outlook on life and the schemes of values, the allegiances, the biology, and the very speech of these colonial settlers varied greatly--and, though all were Spanish-speaking, they can be thought of as different peoples.

Until about the middle of the nineteenth century, the californios, the nuevo mexicanos, and the texanos went their separate cultural ways, held together only lightly by, first, the slender threads of Spain and later for a brief incident by the uncertain and flimsy bonds of independent Mexico. The annexation of Texas and the occupation of the rest of the Southwest by the United States change the course of human affairs in this region. But the change was a slow one, unplanned and haphazard. The United States did not have the social institutions, the cultural "know-how," to carry out an effective program of acculturation among her new citizens, the colonial hispanos. The new states and territories were left to shift for themselves in this regard, with an understandable lack of success. So the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Southwest remained Spansih-speaking and culturally isolated -- unassimilated citizens, subject to the ever-increasing dominance of a foreign culture, of the "American Way."

Even so, other things being equal, time alone would have had its influence. In due course, and with the casualties that accompany haphazard evolution, the hispanos would have become full-fledged Americans. However, not only were the social institutions inadequate for the task, but it soon developed that changing conditions made it impossible for time alone to bring about the assimilation of these colonial peoples. After 1870, the Southwestern scene changed rapidly. The coming of the railroad opened up new economic fields and made the old ones more attractive. The region ceased to be the "Wild West." It became instead a land of opportunity -- a land where minerals and lumber, cotton and corn, cattle and sheep, fruits and vegetables gave rise to new economic empires.

These developments, in themselves, did not hinder the process of acculturation. On the contrary, they should have gone far towards aiding it, just as analogous developments farther east quickly made

Americans of the heterogeneous masses that thronged to America from Europe during the late nineteenth century. However, in addition to the fact that Southwestern developments were based largely on rural life activities and on the production of raw materials in contrast to the urban industrial situation in the East, this area was sparsely populated and, insofar as the "American Way" was concerned, culturally immature and insecure. Worse still, since labor for the new enterprises was not available from the East, the Southwest had to turn to Mexico and the Orient for its labor supply. As a consequence, the region, already suffering from cultural indigestion, added to its troubles by importing thousands of Mexican families, and again postponed the day for the incorporation of its Spanish-speaking population.

Even thus enlarged by immigrants from Mexico, the Indo-Hispanic group could have been assimilated had the Southwest taken time to think out its cultural issues and to attack its fast growing and increasingly complex socio-economic problems--particularly those of this ethnic minority. But before 1910, almost no one seemed aware even that there were far-reaching issues and problems. Virtually no thought was given to the educational, health, economic, or political rehabilitation of these Spanish-speaking peoples. And after 1910 the opportunity had passed. Until then the issues and problems were still of manageable proportions. They were now to grow beyond all hope of quick solution.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 and World War I combined to bring many thousands of Mexicans to the Southwest. Large numbers came as displaced persons, driven across the border by the fortunes of a chaotic civil war. Even larger numbers came as contract laborers, recruited by the trainload to work the best fields of Colorado, the gardens and groves of California, the railroads of the entire West, the copper mines of Arizona, the cotton fields of Texas, and even the iron works of Chicago and the coal mines of West Virginia.

The consequences of this free and easy dipping into the cheap labor reservoir that is Mexico are not too difficult to observe. What for brevity I choose to call "cultural indigestion" can be documented by health and educational statistics, by pictures of the slums of San Antonio, and by all sorts of depressing socio-economic data from all over the Southwest. For present purposes, suffice it to say that once again the Southwest pyramided problem upon problem, burdening itself with a situation for which sooner or later there must be a costly reckoning.

In a way, World War I served a good purpose in this problem. Full employment, good wages, and the educative results of military service stimulated acculturation in the Southwest. However, the issues were much too large and complex to be met adequately by the by-products of war. More research, more planning, and more well thought out action programs were needed.

The "boom and bust" days of the twenties, and the slow recovery of the thirties, saw a little alleviation of the socio-economic

difficulties confronting the Southwest, Thousands of Mexican nationals were repatriated through the joint efforts of the United States and Mexico. However, natural increment soon more than made up for their number. Then the depression years bred more misery, more problems. However, these critical times gave rise to a growing interest in the plight of the unemployed, of out-of-school youth, and of common people generally, This interest was first expressed by state and national surveys. President Hoover's Committee on Social Trends, California Governor Young's Committee on Labor, and the Texas Educational Survey are illustrative of this growing interest. The "New Deal" reforms helped to relieve some of the most acute problems and stimulated the nation to a greater consciousness of its socio-economic defects. In particular, more attention was given to studies of underprivileged groups and of ethnic minorities.

The condition of the Spanish-speaking people in the Southwest was not completely overlooked in this type of activity. Taylor's studies in California and Texas called attention to the plight of the agricultural worker, particularly of the migrant Mexican. Manuel, at the University of Texas, was inaugurating educational studies of the Spanish-speaking group. I was working in the fields of bilingualism and of school finance and administration in New Mexico. Tireman, also in New Mexico, was addressing himself to the teaching problems presented by the bi-cultural situation. Other researchers concerned themselves with a variety of spot studies.

Some reform measures, looking toward the effective acculturation of its population (50 per cent Spanish-speaking), were undertaken by New Mexico in the thirties. These measures involved far-reaching changes in the sources and distribution of school funds, improvement of public health services, more scientific land use and management, increased and more effective political action by Spanish-speaking voters. As a result, by 1940 the Spanish-speaking people of New Mexico were more nearly assimilated than those of any other Southwestern state.

Similar improvements were to be noted for the same period in parts of Colorado, Arizona, and California. Texas, on the other hand, lagged far behind. The educational and health levels of the Texas-Mexican were the worst in the region. Here fundamental civil rights were most flagrantly violated. Effective Spanish-speaking leadership was lacking. Conditions of employment and standards of living were woefully low. In a manner of speaking, then, Texas had become the "horrible example" in the acculturation of Spanish-speaking people. However, there was a growing realization here as elsewhere that none of these states could attain its potential cultural stature until these maladjustments were overcome--and in the last few years Texas has begun to buckle down to the task, so long postponed, of incorporating this one-sixth of its population, the Spanish-speaking Texans.

World War II made several fundamental contributions in this field. First, as in World War I, military service and improved economic conditions gave a great boost to the assimilation of

Spanish-speaking people. In addition, largely in response to pressure from Spanish-speaking groups in the Southwest, the federal government began to sponsor programs designed to improve the bi-cultural situation in this region. More important still, Mexico and the United States agreed to regulate the flow of Mexican labor northward across our southern border.

Whether the two governments realized it or not, this last step struck at the root of much of the evil in the Southwestern picture. As has been noted above, time and again, just as we have been on the verge of cutting our bi-cultural problems to manageable proporations, uncontrolled mass migrations from Mexico have erased our gains and accentuated our cultural indigestion. Now, at a time when the entire Southwest has inaugurated (or is "tooling up" for) effective and large scale programs of acculturation, the control of Mexican immigration would be most timely. It would be indeed short-sighted and tragic if anything were permitted to cause the two governments to deviate from this sound path towards acculturation.

The most serious current threat to an effective program of acculturation in the Southwest was represented, first, by illegal aliens, the so-called "wetbacks." These are called "mojados" along the Rio Grande and "alambres" in California. Tens of thousands of them now labored in the Southwest--without benefit of law, without protection or responsibility--during the 1940's and 1950's. Because the "wetback" could work for whatever he was offered, he made it virtually impossible for residents of the border area to make a satisfactory living there. Thus, tens of thousands of our Spanish-speaking people became displaced persons--men, women, and children--and moved northward to further depress the socio-economic situation of the Spanish-speaking people in other parts of the region. Beginning around 1960, the mass migration of illegal Mexican aliens into the United States was virtually stopped. However, the "wetback" was replaced by the "bracero, the Mexican contract worker recruited in Mexico under Public Law 78. This law, born of our labor shortages during the war emergency of the early 1940's, has resulted in an ever-growing number of Mexican aliens who come to work in the United States--presumably to do agricultural work for which citizen labor is unavailable. These workers, usually paid extremely low wages, like the "wetbacks," displace the American of Mexican descent and make it difficult for him to become fully "Americanized."

Unless we can put an end to the legal or illegal entry of large numbers of Mexican aliens, much of the good work that state and federal agencies are doing in this field will go for naught--and much more time and effort and many more millions of the taxpayers' dollars will be required to bring Texas and her sister states to a desirable and defensible cultural level.

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Bilingualism in the Southwest--A Tragi-Comedy

The second, and longest part, of my larger study is titled "Bilingualism in the Southwest--a Tragi-Comedy." In the present paper, I include excerpts from that part, but I do not have the time to read them. The part deals with two major topics: (1) the long-established fact that the child's vernacular, his mother-tongue, is a valuable asset in any educational program that is conducted in another language; and (2) that the Southwest, except by way of exception, the schools have not only not seized upon Spanish as a natural cultural resource and as a means by which to bring about proficiency in the English language -- not only have we failed by this omission but, by commission, we have placed a stigma on the use by school children of their mother-tongue! We speak of Spanish-speaking children as having a "language handicap," we forbid the use of Spanish and even punish children for speaking it--while all of the time we give lip service to the wisdom of learning foreign languages, and our government spends millions supporting programs that aim at teaching a foreign language to monolingual English-speaking students in in high school and college! In that part, in which I use practices in Texas schools as illustrations of the horrible example, I also make recommendations as to how such practices should be corrected.

The excerpts follow:

.....

.....

It is particularly important to note that it is not the problem of the shrinking world that constitutes the basic justification for the study of foreign languages and that commands the conservation of the foreign home-language resources of our nation, the wisdom of the ages dictates it. Recently, one of my students has pointed out that recorded history of foreign home-language in education goes back four thousand years; to the time when the Semitic Akkadians conquered Sumer and gradually imposed their tongue, Hebrew, upon the Sumerians.[1] In turn, Aramaic supplanted the old Hebrew language; and, just as Sumerian had become a "sacred language" as Hebrew became the vernacular, so Hebrew became the "sacred language" and Aramaic the vernacular. Through the ages, time after time a foreign home-language became the medium of religious instruction as a new language became the vernacular; and bilingualism challenged the teacher. Through the centuries, for Hebrew, for Greek, for Latin, for Arabic; in India, in China, in Europe, in our hemispher, in Russia; in the spread of Buddhism, of Christianity, of Judaism, in the Hellenization of Rome, in the Latinization of Europe, in the Westernization of the Americas; in the rise and fall of imperialistic colonialism; in all of these events do we find the lessons of bilingualism in education.

All of those lessons emphasize the importance and the unquestionable value of the vernacular in education, particularly when the mother-tongue is not the language of instruction. For further support

in this conclusion we can turn to the great thinkers of modern history who have dwelt on this topic and have passed on their views--Juan Luis Vives, Pedro de Gante, John Amos Comenius, John Locke, Johan Heinrich Herbart, John Dewey--and to contemporary figures like Frank Laubach and many psychologists, linguists, and philosophers who have concerned themselves with the place of foreign language in education. All have spoken on this topic, so it comes as something of a shock to the scholar when he looks about in the schools of the Southwest and observes how the lessons of history, how views of great thinkers have been ignored; and how, indeed, violence has been done to those lessons and to those views.

* * * * * * *

Contradictorily, because of unfortunate incidents in our past, there developed in Texas a tradition of disparagement--of disdain and approbrium -- towards "that Mexican" and towards all that the term stood for, including language. Along with that, the immature psychology of "speak American" and the defensive provincialism of "despise that furriner" has led to the down-grading of the Spanish language in the Southwest, and of those who speak it. Otherwise, competent scholars speak of the language of my people of the Southwest as "border Spanish," as something to be bemeaned and avoided. Some, in their ignorance, even refer to it as "Mexican," distinguishing it from Spanish to avoid dignifying it with the name of a language spoken by millions of respectable people (and ignoring the fact that the "Mexican language" is Nahatl)! How little they know our language; how little our history, our circumstance. How little they appreciate the virtues of bilingualism!

* * * * * * *

In Texas we have almost 2,000,000 people for whom Spanish is a home-language. Therein lies a natural cultural resource of vast proportions to the state and to the nation. Yet, we have let it lie fallow. Indeed, we have neglected it so that, sometimes, stigma is associated with that asset. A few years ago my wife was approached by two little girls in one of the Austin schools. They were of Mexican descent, as is my wife. They asked, "Mrs. Sanchez, are you white or are you Mexican?" She drew them out on this a bit and finally asked, "How can you tell when one is white and when one is Mexican?" "Well, you see," they chirped, "if you speak one language you are white; if you speak two languages you are Mexican." This was said by these little girls not with pride for their bilingualism, nor with pride for their status in this society. They well might have said this proudly; well might they have gloried on being bilingual, in being not simply Americans, but Americans-plus--but, alas, it was not so. Their queries and their implied connotations as regards the bilingualism of the more than a million and a half Spanish-speaking people of Texas are sad commentaries on our treatment of a highly valuable natural cultural resource to which, otherwise, we pay lip-service.

We extol the virtues of foreign languages in the development and in the achievements of the educated man, we decry their decline in public education, we view with alarm our backwardness in this respect when we compare ourselves with the Russians, and so on. Yet, here, one of the world's great languages--a language that gives flavor and color to our regional culture, a language spoken as a home-language by a very large sector of our population--a language that can be that of all of us virtually for the asking not only goes begging but is suppressed. It does not make sense!

The reasoning that children with a foreign home-language are "exceptional," just as the mentally retarded and those who are hard of hearing are exceptional, is a very dangerous conclusion. Were one to follow out of this line of reasoning we would have an insuperable problem, which could be augmented by classifying the kids from the other side of the railroad tracks as exceptional, as those from the "silk-stocking" district as exceptional--that is, as "exceptional" any deviants from the non-existent statistical average, the "typical child." As Marie Hughes and I have pointed out elsewhere, what the foreign home-language child needs is not special education--just good schools.[2] We often err, too, in equating "bilingualism" with "handicap" or, at least, with some sort of special problem in education. This is a perversion both of the word and of the implied thesis; for, if being monolingual in a non-school language were, indeed, a handicap, then the <u>desideratum</u> would be bilingualims!

There can be no argument that, speaking generally, the Spanish-speaking child in the Southwest is socially and economically disadvantaged. The evidence is overwhelming to the effect that in health, wealth, and welfare he is at or near the bottom of the scale when compared with his fellow Americans.[3] That is to say that, in general, he lives "on the other side of the tracks." This fact, of course, does offer special challenges to the school; in the teaching of English as in virtually all other phases of the curriculum, as would be the case with any other child, regardless of mother-tongue. The fact that his state of socio-economic disadvantage is usually accompanied by a lack of knowledge of the English language is nearly always interpreted as a "language handicap," and as "bilingualism." As a consequence of this confusion, the school, in trying to account for and to treat the child's handicap, addresses itself to a tangential and fruitless hunt into the mysteries of the deleterious effects of being unable to speak English. So, instead of adapting its program to the requirements of children who are disadvantaged because of socio-economic factors, the school strives mightily to find in this nebulous "language handicap" a scapegoat for its lack of understanding.

As stated or implied throughout this paper, I am of the conviction that the schools of the Southwest are not faced really with a problem of language handicap by the fact that large numbers of the pupils come to school speaking little or no English. The issues are

not truly linguistic ones, but rather ones in the area of social policy, of school organization and administration, and of pedagogical competence. This conviction is not an unsupported one, for there are many thousands of persons in the Southwest whose mother tongue was Spanish; who were socially and economically disadvantaged, etc. -- that is, who were in the same environmental situation as that of the Spanish-speaking children who fail miserably in many public schools today -- and who, far from showing ill-effects because of their circumstances, did "make the grade." To attribute this to the suggestion that "they were different" .(!) does not jibe with the statistics as to the distribution of intelligence. In the light of this fact, of numerous others to the same purpose, I cannot but come to the conclusion that the fundamental difference in their case and that of their unfortunate fellows was the quality of the school involved. Good schools -- and by this I do not mean anything truly extraordinary, just good schools as judged the country over -- take the "problem" of the Spanish-speaking child in stride. In the others, educational disaster. The conviction, then, is that in "teaching English to Spanish-speaking children" in the latter type of schools we are confronted not with handicapped children but with handicapped schools.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]Sam Frank Cheavens, "Vernacular Languages in Education" (Unpublished doctor's dissertation, University of Texas, 1957).

[2]Marie Hughes and George I. Sánchez, Learning a New Language, 1958.

[3]United States Bureau of the Census, U. S. Census of Population: 1950, Vol. 4, Special Reports, Part 3, Chapter 6, Persons of Spanish Surname, 1953, (Summarized in Robert H. Talbert, Spanish-Name People in the West and Southwest, 1955)

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Conservation of Spanish in the Southwest

The foregoing two parts should make it abundantly clear that the retention of the Spanish language by the Americans of Mexican descent in the Southwest has been the function of default, rather than of any concerted popular institutionalized effort. The Mexicans whom the United States acquired through the American Occupation of the Nineteenth Century were virtually wholly illiterate. As noted, in my Forgotten People and in the works of numerous other students, little was done for the "Americanization" of this population group in the Nineteenth Century; or in the Twentieth, for that matter, in some of the areas where the Spanish-speaking population predominated or existed in large concentrations.

The educational level of this population group is extremely low, as reference to the latest figures of the United States Bureau of the Census will show. So one would expect a fairly low level of linguistic proficiency on the part of the Mexican-American. Oddly enough, but not inexplicably so, his Spanish is of good quality. This is due in considerable part to his very isolation from the dominant, English-speaking group. In part, too, this has been due to the strange phenomenon which has made Mexico, as Don Federico de Onis once said in my home, the country where, taken as a whole, the best Spanish is spoken. In fact, he said: "They do not speak Spanish, they sing it!" I could dwell on this phenomenon at much greater length, but it may not be apropos here. Suffice it to recognize that the mexicano, whether in Mexico or in the U.S. Southwest, has had a flair for the Spanish language --whether he was literate or not. Of course, many of them in the Southwest fall into barbarisms which are the product of paucity of vocabulary, of English-named articles and practices for which there are no Spanish equivalents, and of the virtual absolute lack of formal tutoring in the language. In some parts of the Southwest, as in the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee, many archaic expressions are still common -- for the same reason here as there, isolation and lack of education.

One could quibble and point to the feeble efforts of the Spanish-language press; or to those of organizations of Spanish-speaking people; or to the fact that the Spanish language is an official language in New Mexico, and was widely used in politics and in the Legislature until recent years. Credit is due these factors, of course, but the fact remains that, in the Southwest, Spanish has been retained as a major language primarily by the default of the institutions of social incorporation. This default, though producing unfortunate results in other spheres, could be turned into tremendous advantage. Some suggestions on this score are made in my article, cited above. Others will occur to those who recognize bilingualism and multilingualism as of great value not only in our relations with the rest of the world but as of incalculable worth in the enhancement of the human spirit, in the development of the highest order of humanism.

[4]George I. Sánchez, "The American of Mexican Descent," The Chicago Jewish Forum, Volume 20, No. 2, Winter, 1961-62.

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